

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL
DECISION



DECISION OF: S151 OFFICER

WITH ADVICE FROM: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE AND DIRECTOR OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE

DIRECTORATE: PEOPLE

DECISION NO: 002 **(2020/21 FREE SCHOOL MEALS COVID 19)**

SUBJECT: Free School Meals, Voucher Scheme

KEY DECISION: No

REASON:

This is the replacement for the free school meals provision in schools that was set up when some schools closed and to replace the distribution model that was in place by Chartwells and other Catering Providers in Bristol Schools as required,

BACKGROUND:

Due to the Government announcement that schools were to close and that only Key Worker Children and in some cases vulnerable pupils should attend, it was no longer possible for the Free Schools Meals catering provision to be delivered in schools. To try and prevent food poverty for children entitled to Free School Meals, the Government announced that they would set up a National Voucher Scheme that schools could join, to provide a £15 food voucher per week for these pupils.

Due to the delay in this scheme being set up by Central Government in week one Bristol City Council (BCC) set up a 5 day food hamper provision for collection/delivery in schools which was fraught with logistical issues. In the absence of any other provision BCC set up a voucher scheme that all schools could join in order to be able to deliver vouchers to parents so they could purchase food for their children. There is now a National Scheme in place and schools have been advised that they must now join the Central Government Scheme by no later than 1st May 2020. We have received notification from the DfE that schools will be able to claim these costs in line with Covid-19 guidance on school funding.

DECISION:

To implement a temporary Free School Meal voucher scheme and approve the purchase of vouchers costing £439,797

REASONS:

To prevent food poverty and ensure a meal for children entitled to a Free School Meal due to a delay in the government scheme.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

Possible options included providing eligible pupils not attending school with meals or food parcels through a current food provider. Doing nothing was not an option.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

This is a full recharge situation and BCC will be reimbursed for this amount (£439,797) by the DfE/schools. Now that the DfE have launched their own voucher scheme, schools will move across to this system at the end of April and order directly from the DfE.

LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS

The Education Act 1996 requires maintained schools and academies (including free schools) to provide free school meals to disadvantaged pupils who are aged between 5 and 16 years old. At a time of national emergency with schools closed and the absence of a national scheme, BCC has a community leadership role to help schools to provide food as a replacement for free school meals.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

CONSULTATION

Discussions have taken place with schools.

RISK MANAGEMENT

N/A

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

Have you undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment? Yes / No

APPENDICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS

This decision is being taken under the urgency/emergency powers provided in the Council's Constitution and scheme of delegation.

The Head of Paid Service and / or Section 151 Officer can take emergency action on behalf of the Council on any matter in cases of urgency or emergency, wherever possible in consultation with the Mayor or Deputy Mayor for Finance, Governance and Performance and subject to a full report as soon as possible afterwards to the relevant forum explaining the decision, the reasons for it and why the decision was treated as a matter of urgency.

SIGNATORIES:

DECISION MAKER:



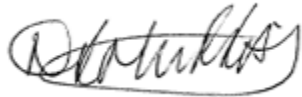
Signed:

Alison Hurley, Director Education and Skills

S151 Officer and / or Head of Paid Service

Title Director of Finance/S151 Officer

Signed



Date: 1 May 2020